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ΤΑ ΓΕΡΡΑ ΕΝΕΠΙΜΗΡΑΣΑΝ, DEMOSTHENES xviii. 169

By CHARLES D. ADAMS

Demosthenes *De Corona* 169: 'Εσπέρα μὲν γὰρ ἦν, ἦκε δ' ἀγγέλλων τις ὡς τοὺς πρυτάνεις ὡς 'Ελάτεια κατείληπται. καὶ μετὰ ταῦθ' οἱ μὲν εὐθὺς ἐξαναστάντες μεταξὺ δειπνοῦντες τοὺς τ' ἐκ τῶν σκηνῶν τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐξεῖργον καὶ τὰ γέρρ' ἐνεπίμπρασαν, οἱ δὲ τοὺς στρατηγούς μετεπέμποντο καὶ τὸν σαλπικτὴν ἐκάλουν· καὶ βορύβου πλήρης ἦν ἡ πόλις. "It was evening; one came to the prytanes with the news that Elateia had been seized. And then some of them instantly, arising in the midst of their supper, drove the men from the booths throughout the agora and set fire to the wicker-work, while others summoned the generals and called the trumpeter; and the city was full of tumult."

Reiske's comment is as follows:

Tabernae erant in foro sitae, in quibus sedentes opifices sellularii scruta et supellectilem domesticam a se domi fabricatam vendebant. Hae σκηναί appellabantur: die Buden. Constructae hae erant tribus e lateribus et desuper tectae cratibus vimineis, quae γέρρα appellantur. Quoniam igitur illae tabernae cum suis quaeque craticulis tam cito auferri non poterant, necesse tamen erat, ut protinus populus in foro conveniret, utpote illa nocte ibi in armis excubaturus, imperarunt prytanes, ut tabernis ignes iniicerentur, qui tabernas momento citius absumerent et laborem crates auferendi baiulis compendifacerent.

Reiske here asserts three things: first, that the γέρρα which were burned were the mats of which the traders' booths were made; second, that the purpose in burning them was to hasten the clearing

of the agora; third, that the purpose in thus hastily clearing the agora was to make a clear space where the militia might camp that night under arms.

That the γέppα of this passage were the materials of which the σκηναί, the stalls or booths, were made, is the unanimous testimony of the ancient scholiasts and lexicographers, but the reason for burning them has been variously conjectured both in ancient and modern times. My first purpose in this paper is to renew Reiske's supposition, neglected by later scholars, that the purpose of the prytanes was *to secure a place for the instant assembling and encampment of the militia*. This fits all the circumstances of the case: the messenger from the north had brought the news that Philip was at Elateia; that meant the road to Thebes, and that meant Attica. By this time the people of Athens knew enough of Philip's methods to be aware that he was not the man to linger on the road. Many assumed, as we know from Demosthenes' speech of the next morning, that the Thebans were on Philip's side; when the messenger left the north, Philip was already near the northern boundary of Boeotia; any hour now his advance cavalry might be expected on the plain of Attica. Can we conceive of any other thought than this as having been the first in the minds of the prytanes when they at their supper table received the news? And would not their first concern be to call the citizens instantly to arms? Demosthenes' account fits this supposition precisely: one group of the prytanes summons the generals and the trumpeter to issue the call to arms and to muster the troops as they come in from their homes; another group of the prytanes makes haste to get the assembly place ready for them; they order the hucksters out of the booths, and these hurry away with their baskets of wares; the wicker stuff that has served as booths is piled up and burned. Perhaps there is something more of haste than is absolutely necessary, perhaps some waste of good mats, but in such excitement is it not entirely credible? But what warrant have we for the assumption that the prytanes would take it for granted that the militia would encamp in the agora that night? Schaefer thought there was none. "Haec satis improbabilia sunt," he says, and that seems to be the view of his successors, for they do not even mention the possibility of such an explanation. But it

seems to me that we have very clear light on the situation in another narrative, which has not, so far as I know, been used to illustrate the account given by Demosthenes. That is Andocides' account of the events of a day and night in the year 415 B.C., two generations earlier than the time of Demosthenes. The Hermae had been mutilated; the city was full of suspicion of an oligarchical plot; then all at once came the denunciation of a large group of citizens by an informer, and the alarming news that the Lacedaemonians were on the Isthmus, and the Boeotians mobilizing on the Attic frontier. Andocides describes the situation:

On the Mysteries 45: ἡ δὲ βουλὴ ἐξελθοῦσα ἐν ἀπορρήτῃ συνέλαβεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἔδησεν ἐν τοῖς ξύλοις. ἀνακαλέσαντες δὲ τοὺς στρατηγούς ἀναιπείν ἐκέλευσαν Ἀθηναίων τοὺς μὲν ἐν ἄστει οἰκοῦντας ἰέναι εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν τὰ ὄπλα λαβόντας, τοὺς δ' ἐν μακρῷ τείχει εἰς τὸ Θησεῖον, τοὺς δ' ἐν Πειραιεὶ εἰς τὴν Ἴπποδαμείαν ἀγορὰν, τοὺς δὲ ἱππέας ἔτι <πρὸ> νυκτὸς σημῆναι τῇ σάλπιγγι ἦκειν εἰς τὸ Ἀνάκιον, τὴν δὲ βουλήν εἰς ἀκρόπολιν ἰέναι καὶ ἐκεῖ καθεῦδειν, τοὺς δὲ πρυτάνεις ἐν τῇ θόλῃ.

On this occasion, as on the later one, the senate (or their prytanes) call the generals and their trumpeter to issue and proclaim military orders. The hastily called militia of the city district is to use the agora as assembly place and camping-ground. As a matter of course on both occasions the agora must have been cleared of any trading-booths and other obstructions.

The interpretation of Demosthenes' account that I have revived may be criticized as assuming an unnecessary destruction of property—whether we assume the booths to have been the property of the individual shopkeepers or a part of the public property of the agora. Could not the wicker mats have been hustled out of the way? Why burn them? Doubtless that could have been done had the prytanes been less excited. But imagine the situation: the shopkeepers themselves were hurrying off with their wares, the people were pouring into the agora as the alarm spread—very soon *θορύβου πλήρης ἦν ἡ πόλις*. As the prytanes, jostled by the incoming crowds, are pulling down and piling up the mats, it is easy to imagine an excited and overzealous member picking up a brazier of coals from a shop floor and flinging them onto the pile—clearing the place once for all. The purpose was entirely rational, to make

ready the camping-place for the militia; the means used was the result of excitement, and probably that of some one individual. We must remember, too, that the Athenians had nothing but contempt for the small shopkeepers, the *κάπηλοι*; many of them were foreigners; their name was synonymous for petty trickery; if their booths, encroaching on the open space of the agora, were in the way in a time like this, we can well believe that the question of their property rights did not enter the mind of the zealous prytanes.

I turn now to an examination of other interpretations of this passage. The writer of the article *γέρρα* in Harpocration's lexicon says the wicker coverings and curtains of the booths were burned *ὕπὲρ τοῦ μὴ συνεστάναι περὶ τὰ ὦνια ἐπὶ τῆς ἀγορᾶς μηδὲ πρὸς ἄλλους τισὶ τὰς διατριβὰς ἔχειν*, "to prevent crowds gathering about the merchandise in the agora or loitering at anything else." But that was an evening when there was no danger of loitering about the shops. Fuhr, in his revision of Blass's *Rede vom Kranze*, conjectures that the purpose was to clear a place for the people, who were beginning to stream into the agora. The explanation is too trivial; the prytanes had more important matters on their minds at that moment than providing standing-room for a curious crowd.

The favorite explanation is that the *γέρρα* were burned to give a smoke or fire signal to the country people, some say to bring in their property for protection, others say to come to a special meeting of the ecclesia the next morning (Westermann, Schaefer, Weil, Pickard-Cambridge). Goodwin, appreciating the absurdity of supposing that whenever the country people saw a smoke arising from the middle of the city they packed up and hurried into the walled town, suggests that it was understood that a fire on top of Lycabettus meant a call for a special meeting of the ecclesia on the following morning; that this afternoon therefore the prytanes seized the mats as the first material that came to hand, took them to the top of Lycabettus, and built their signal fire there. This is all mere conjecture and very improbable conjecture, for if there had been any such arrangement of Lycabettus signals for special meetings of the ecclesia, surely the proper supply of beacon material would have been kept on the spot. The whole theory of the burning of the mats as a signal, whether from the agora itself or from an eminence, is full of

absurdities, as Professor Humphreys has sufficiently shown in his critical note on this passage.

Another group of scholars have taken refuge in emendation. Instead of τὰ γέρρα ἔνεπίμπρασαν they write τὰ γέρρα ἀνεπετάνυσαν (Paul Girard, *Revue de Philologie*, XI, 25-32; Blass, *Rede vom Kranze*, Anhang I; Butcher and Humphreys approve, though printing ἔνεπίμπρασαν in their texts). It should be noted at once that the MS authority for ἔνεπίμπρασαν is unanimous, and that it includes a papyrus fragment of about the year 200 A.D. The lexicographers and scholiasts also testify without exception to this reading. The proposed reading rests on a different interpretation of τὰ γέρρα; these are assumed to be wicker hurdles regularly used to bar the entrance to certain of the streets coming into the agora. Demosthenes' statement is then interpreted as meaning that the prytanes "stretched the hurdles," i.e., closed these streets. And we are told that this was done as one of the regular preliminaries to a meeting of the ecclesia. We are to understand then that as preparatory to the meeting of the next morning on the Pnyx, the prytanes late in the afternoon before, when the news came to them, closed trade in the agora by driving the shopmen from their booths, barred the streets that did not lead from the agora to the Pnyx, and summoned the generals, with the trumpeter, to issue and proclaim the order for a special meeting of the ecclesia for the next morning.¹

Now this account is not without its own difficulties. It assumes that the predominant thought of the prytanes when they heard that an attack by Philip was imminent was, not how to put the city into an instant state of defense, but how to get a full meeting of the ecclesia tomorrow morning. And it assumes that the measures which were sometimes taken to force the idle and reluctant crowd to leave their loafing-place in the agora and go up to the Pnyx were felt to be so necessary on this occasion that the prytanes themselves did the work, and did it fully twelve hours before there was any possible reason for having it done. And then why drive the shopmen out tonight? All that will be needed will be to forbid them

¹ There is no reason to suppose that the prytanes lacked authority to call a special meeting of the ecclesia themselves. See Aristotle *Resp. Ath.* 43. 3. It is doubtful whether the generals could do it except through the prytanes.

to open their shops tomorrow morning. And finally—the great absurdity of all—who can believe that as the crowds began to pour into the agora that evening as the news spread through the city, it was found practicable to bar the majority of the agora entrances with hurdles? If this barring with the hurdles were something that was done early on the morning of the ecclesia, it would not be entirely unthinkable, though it would be quite needless on an occasion when the people were so eager for advice and action. But to imagine it as taking place in the afternoon, or early in the evening, of the previous day, I find quite impossible.

Now an examination of the passages which suggested this emendation will show that the emendation rests upon a false interpretation of those passages themselves, and that the use of γέρρα at any time to bar the streets leading out of the agora is pure conjecture.

The emendation goes back to the words τὰ γέρρα ἀνεπετάννυσαν in the scholion on Aristophanes' *Acharnians* v. 22. Dicaeopolis says, as he sits on the Pnyx in the early morning, impatient at the delay of his fellow-citizens in coming to ecclesia, "Here is the Pnyx empty; and they are gossiping in the agora, and running up and down dodging the painted rope." The scholiast explains that in order to compel the citizens to attend the ecclesia, two policemen were accustomed to drive the crowd before a painted rope dragged across the agora. He gives in detail the steps preliminary to this dragging of the rope from one side of the agora to the other: he says, ἀνεπετάννυσαν γὰρ τὰ γέρρα καὶ ἀπέκλειον τὰς ὁδοὺς τὰς μὴ φερούσας εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ τὰ ὦνια ἀνήρουν ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς ὅπως μὴ περὶ ταῦτα διατρίβοιεν. Omitting for the moment the first clause, we read that they closed those streets which did not lead to the ecclesia, and they removed the goods which were on sale in the agora. Imagine the situation: the streets not leading toward the Pnyx are barred, and the shopkeepers have gone off with their goods; what else needs to be done before the rope can be drawn across the agora to force out the loitering voters? Manifestly the booths must come down; the rope cannot be drawn across while they are still standing; and so we turn to the first detail of the scholiast's account, ἀνεπετάννυσαν τὰ γέρρα, "they spread out the wicker work"; precisely what was needed. With the sides and tops of the booths *spread flat on the ground* there

was nothing to hinder drawing the rope across the agora; there was no need of lugging the mats away. I am interpreting τὰ γέρρα precisely as in the *Crown Speech*; and I take ἀνεπετάννυσαν in its ordinary meaning, "they opened up, they spread out." The word is oftenest used of the opening of doors or gates: Xen. *Anab.* vii. 1. 17, ἀνεπετάννυσαν τὰς πύλας "they threw open the gates"; Herod. 3. 146, ἀναπετάσας τὰς πύλας "having thrown open the gates"; so Pindar *Nem.* 9. 2; *Olymp.* 6. 27; Isoc. 15. 126. Plato *Republic* 514a, the cave has its entrance ἀναπεπταμένην πρὸς τὸ φῶς "open to the light"; in Xenophon *Oecon.* 9. 4 the house with a southern exposure πρὸς μεσημβρίαν ἀναπέπταται; in Plutarch *Pericles* 34 the life in the open is called δίαίτα ἀναπεπταμένη; the scholiast on the *Speech against Neaera* (§ 90) uses ἀναπετασθῆναι of the opening of the assembly place (πρὶν ἀναπετασθῆναι τὴν ἐκκλησίαν παντὶ τῷ εἰπεῖν βουλομένῳ). In Pindar *Isth.* 4. 47 the fox awaits the swoop of the eagle ἀναπιτναμένα, flattened out. I conclude then that the scholiast on *Acharnians* 22 means to tell us that the first step preparatory to sweeping the agora with the dripping rope was to open up and spread flat on the ground the booths of the tradesmen; after this certain streets were barred; meanwhile the tradesmen had hustled their wares out of the way; only the loitering citizens remained, and they were swept out of the agora before the painted rope.¹

Those who seek in this passage a clue to the passage in the *Crown Speech* interpret very differently. They assume that the words τὰ γέρρα ἀνεπετάννυσαν in the scholion give the means by which

¹ For this discussion it does not matter whether or not the scholiast was right in his understanding of what was done with the painted rope. He certainly supposed that it was drawn across the agora to force out the voters and drive them toward the Pnyx, and his words ἀνεπετάννυσαν τὰ γέρρα must be interpreted on that supposition. Compare Aristophanes *Ecclesiaz.* 378 f. and the scholion: καὶ δῆτα πολλὸν ἢ μίλτος, ὦ Ζεῦ φίλτατε, γέλων παρέσχεν, ἣν προσέρραινον κύκλῳ. Schol., κατὰ γὰρ τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐσθῶβουν εἰς ἐκκλησίαν τοὺς Ἀθηναίους μεμιλωμένῳ σχοινίῳ. We have the same view in Pollux viii. 104: τοὺς μὴ ἐκκλησιάζοντας ἐξημίουν, καὶ τοὺς ἐκκλησιάζοντας ἐξήταζον, καὶ σχοινίον μιλιώσαντες διὰ τῶν τοξοτῶν συνήλανον τοὺς ἐκ τῆς ἀγορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

A different view of the custom at which Aristophanes hints is elaborated by L. Schmidt, *Antiquitatum Graecarum capp. duo*, pp. 9 ff. It is summarized, with approval, in Schoemann-Lipsius (*Griech. Alterthümer*, I, 407) in these words: "Der Versammlungsplatz wurde durch mit Mennig gefärbte Seile abgesperrt und ein gleiches geschah mit dem in der Nähe der Pnyx gelegenen Marktplatz, der sonst den Mittelpunkt des Verkehrs bildete."

the action of the next clause, the barring of the streets, was effected: *ἀνεπετάννυσαν τὰ γέρρα καὶ ἀπέκλειον τὰς ὁδοὺς* "they spread the wicker hurdles and (thereby) closed the streets." Assuming for the moment that *τὰ γέρρα* may mean hurdles, and that they were regularly used for barricading these streets, it is certainly surprising to find the scholiast using this verb *ἀνεπετάννυσαν* for the erection of the hurdles, for, as we have just seen, its ordinary meaning is to open up gates and doors, not to close them. Of course the proper word for barricading is *φράσσω* or one of its compounds, as in Philochorus *Frag.* 79b (the description of preparations for the ballot on ostracism) *ἐφράσσετο σάνισιν ἢ ἀγορά, καὶ κατελείποντο εἰσοδοὶ δέκα* "the agora was barred off with planks, and ten entrances were left." So far as etymology goes one might use *ἀνεπετάννυσαν* of "stretching out" a hurdle across a street, but I find no instance of a similar use of the word; its common use in the sense of "open up" makes such use very unlikely. Moreover this interpretation of the Aristophanes scholion involves the assumption that here the *γέρρα* are hurdles, regularly used to bar streets. But have we any authority for such use of the word? Harpocration connects the *γέρρα* with the market booths only, either as coverings, sides, or *περιφράγματα* (meaning probably partitions separating one from another or dividing the space into passageways). He also says *καὶ οἱ τόποι οἱ παραπεφραγμένοι*, meaning, I suppose, the place of the booths as a whole. The *Etymologicum Magnum* has similar definitions. The attempt has been made to find the meaning "barricades" (wicker-hurdles) in the *Speech against Neaera*, § 90. The speaker is describing in detail the steps that must be taken in order to confer Athenian citizenship on a foreigner. He tells us that after it has been voted by the people, the gift must be confirmed at the next ecclesia by a secret ballot, in which, to give validity to the vote, 6,000 citizens must participate. He does not tell us where this secret balloting takes place, whether on the Pnyx or in the agora. The words in question are as follows: *τοὺς δὲ πρυτάνεις κελεύει τιθεῖν τοὺς καδίσκους ὁ νόμος καὶ τὴν ψήφον δίδοναι προσιόντι τῷ δήμῳ, πρὶν τοὺς ξένους εἰσιέναι, καὶ τὰ γέρρα ἀναιρεῖν, ἵνα κύριος ὢν αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ ἕκαστος σκοπῇται πρὸς αὐτὸν ὄντινα μέλλει πολίτην ποιήσεσθαι, εἰ ἄξιός ἐστι τῆς δωρεῆς ὁ μέλλων λήψεσθαι* "the law commands the prytanes to set out the ballot boxes and give

the vote to the people as they come up, before the foreigners come in, and to carry off the γέρρα, in order that each man, in full control of himself, may consider by himself what sort of man he is about to make a citizen, whether he is worthy of the gift that he is about to receive." The main point is clear: no foreigners are to have access to the voters while the balloting is in progress. Our question now turns on the words τὴν ψήφον διδόναι προσιόντι τῷ δήμῳ πρὶν τοὺς ξένους εἰσιέναι καὶ τὰ γέρρα ἀναιρεῖν. Some scholars assume that the γέρρα here referred to are hurdles used at meetings of the ecclesia on the Pnyx to bar out foreigners, when matters are being handled that demand their exclusion. As Blass punctuates, . . . τῷ δήμῳ, πρὶν τοὺς ξένους εἰσιέναι καὶ τὰ γέρρα ἀναιρεῖν, we have to understand that after this special balloting is over, the foreigners will come in and remove the barriers. I need not dwell on the difficulty of assuming that the foreigners are allowed themselves to remove the barriers, or on the apparent implication that the foreigners first come in, and then proceed to remove the barriers that have been keeping them out. The punctuation is simply impossible; ἀναιρεῖν must be made co-ordinate with τιθέναι and διδόναι; the law directs the officials to conduct the balloting before the foreigners come in, and it directs the officials ἀναιρεῖν τὰ γέρρα. But we have no warrant for the assumption that foreigners were allowed to mingle with the voters in the Athenian ecclesia; the board of ληξιαρχοὶ and their assistants were appointed expressly to prevent this (Poll. 8. 104, Gilbert, *Staatsalterthümer*, p. 322). Whatever may be the meaning of the words τὰ γέρρα ἀναιρεῖν, they certainly cannot mean the removal of barriers so that foreigners could take seats with the Athenian citizens in ecclesia. In fact it is impossible to find any meaning for the phrase as applied to anything that could happen on the Pnyx after the people were assembled there.¹

But if we assume—what Gilbert and Busolt think probable—that the ballot which was taken to confirm a grant of citizenship was taken in the same place as the ballot for ostracism, *in the agora*,

¹ The explanation in Harpocration, *s.v.*, γέρρα, is impossible: πρὶν εἰσιέναι τοὺς ξένους καὶ πρὶν ἀναιρεθῆναι τὰ περιφράγματα, τουτέστι πρὶν ἀναπετασθῆναι τὴν ἐκκλησίαν παντὶ τῷ εἰπεῖν βουλομένῳ.

and with the same machinery, all difficulties disappear. Philochorus (*Frag.* 79b) thus describes the process in the case of ostracism: ἐφράσσετο σάνισιν ἢ ἀγορὰ καὶ κατελείποντο εἰσοδοὶ δέκα, δι' ὧν εἰσίνοντες κατὰ φυλὰς ἐτίθεσαν τὰ ὄστρακα. "The agora was fenced off with boards, and ten entrances were left, through which they entered by tribes and cast their ballots." Plutarch (*Arist.* 7) describes the place of the balloting a little more precisely: ὄστρακον λαβὼν ἕκαστος καὶ γράψας ὃν ἐβούλετο μεταστῆσαι τῶν πολιτῶν ἔφερον εἰς ἓνα τόπον τῆς ἀγορᾶς περιπεφραγμένον ἐν κύκλῳ δρυφάκτοις, "each man taking a potsherd, and writing the name of that one of the citizens whom he wished to remove, brought it to one place of the agora, which place was fenced off on all sides by railings." This inclosure, then, with its ten entrances where the members of the several tribes could be checked off by the supervisors, was erected inside the agora. Now if the same method was used in the case of the balloting by six thousand citizens for confirmation of citizenship—and the similarity of conditions makes it likely that it was used—the specifications of the law as given in the Neaera speech become at once intelligible and consistent. That law requires the prytanes to set out the ballot boxes (τιθέναι τοὺς καδίσκους) and give opportunity to vote to the people as they come up (τὴν ψῆφον διδόναι προσιόντι τῷ δήμῳ). Of course the voters will come up to the boxes in the central balloting inclosure through the ten entrances. But that they may not, as they come into the free part of the agora on their way to the voting inclosure, be importuned and influenced by foreigners who would ordinarily be there, in and about the tradesmen's booths, the law provides that this ballot take place before the foreigners come into the agora at all (πρὶν τοὺς ξένους εἰσιέναι) and, both to assist in keeping them out and to make room for the extraordinary gathering of the citizens and the special balloting-inclosure, the law directs the prytanes to remove the traders' booths altogether (ἀνελεῖν τὰ γέρρα). That the booths, if allowed to remain standing, would naturally involve the presence of the foreigners is evident when we remember that retail trade in Athens was very largely in their hands; hence the article, τοὺς ξένους.¹

¹ On foreigners in the agora shops see Boeckh, *Staatshaushaltung*, I, 404.

Thus in each of the three much-discussed passages that we have considered we have found that the simple and natural interpretation is that the γέρρα are the booth mats. In the Aristophanes scholion we learn that when the two policemen were about to drag the red rope across the agora, they flattened out these booth mats (ἀνεπετάννυσαν τὰ γέρρα). When the prytanes were preparing the agora for the balloting by six thousand citizens, they were directed by the law to carry off the booth mats (τὰ γέρρα ἀναίρειν). And when, in 339 B.C., the prytanes, expecting any hour to hear that Philip was across the border, were calling the citizens to encamp in the agora under arms as their grandfathers had done in Andocides' day, they drove the shopkeepers from their booths, tore down the mats, and set fire to them (τὰ γέρρα' ἐνεπίμπρασαν).

The emendation ἀνεπετάννυσαν in Demosthenes *De Corona* 169 rests on misinterpretation of the Aristophanes scholia. Emendation is unnecessary, if we accept Reiske's natural explanation of events, viewed in the light of the similar events of an earlier time, recorded by Andocides.

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